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Subject: God's Will is Good Will.

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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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GOD'S WILL IS GOOD WILL.

"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."—**PHIL. iv., 4-7.**

In the Sermon on the Mount, although there is commendation of sorrow, there is also command of joy and rejoicing under circumstances which seem to be antagonistic to anything like joy. We find, also, in the letters of the inspired men, the same exhortation. We find them declaring that joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit, and so one of the evidences of true piety. We behold an unconscious evidence of that same truth in the general tone of the New Testament writings. I do not believe there is in the compass of human literature a book that deals with such profound topics, that touches human nature on so many sides of experience, that relates so especially to its sorrows, its temptations, its sins, its guilt, its dangers, all the forces which hover over that aspect, and to its hopes, its inspirations, its possibilities—and yet, which looks over the whole field of human life with such cheerfulness of spirit. The New Testament is a book of radiant joy. Although there are certain passages in it which are terrible, on the whole it is a book that evidently came from the inspiration of hope, and is full of courage, and full of comfort. You may say what you please about the inspiration of Scripture, as long as there are tears in the world, and sorrows that make them, as long as there are sins, and the fears which guilt breeds in men, so long the books of the New Testament will be considered authoritative—and for this simple reason, that they bring balm to the wants of men where men's wants are most immedicable with any ordinary dealing.

Yet, it is a question whether Christianity has produced as much joy as it has sorrow—such have been its perversions; such the misunderstandings of its interpreters. I doubt if any other organized system has been the cause and the occasion of such stupendous cruelty, both to the body and to the soul, as Christianity has in the hands of its interpreters from age to age. In looking round upon the church now, in these better times, when men are released from many superstitions, if you were to look for the signal of joy as one of the tokens of Christianity, I hardly know whether I should be justified in saying that you can tell the difference between men who are Christians and men who are not, by this: that Christians are more radiant, that they are happier, than other men. That some are, there is no doubt. That here and there, whether it be temperament, or whether it be a better disabusing of their minds of past teaching, or whether it be a peculiarly spiritual constitution which enables them to seize what eludes others—whatever may be the application of it—there are many who rejoice, I do not doubt; but I doubt if practically it would be safe to make an appeal to the world, and say that all who are Christians are distinguished from those who are not Christians by this element of joy in the Lord—or in anything else.

On the other hand, it seems to me that if it were once to be a thing settled and certain that to become a Christian was to become a child of joy, and that the peace which passeth all understanding was to be realized by every such one—if that were to be a thing approved by observation and made known by experience, the very current of the world would be changed. What is it that every man seeks but that very joy? What is the motive of labor, of watching, of foresight, of even care and pains, but the fruit of joy which men expect to reap? And if there could be found a bay where the influences were tranquil—if the church were some such bay—all streams would run into it, or toward it.

Oh, how many there are waiting for peace, watching for peace, journeying for peace, longing for peace! Peace—the peace which passeth all understanding—in search of that blessed boon, how many pilgrims there are, high and low! and how few there are that find it!

When you look at the actual lives of Christians—even of those who strive to live in accordance with the innermost meaning of the term *disciples of Christ*, do you find joy? I do not think that you find it in any such measure as to characterize them and discriminate them from other people. Was there, then, an impossible thing commanded? Was that commanded which could not take place? I think not.

Our florists make up packages of seeds, and send out for a dollar thirty kinds, or for two dollars eighty kinds; there are directions that go with them; and every package is labeled, "Gorgeous purple," "Exceedingly beautiful," "Remarkably fine," and so on, referring to the flowers. Now, let these seeds go into the hands of some clumsy person who perhaps has raised corn and potatoes, but who has never raised flowers; and let him plant them in cold, wet, barren soil, and at an untimely season. A few of them will sprout, and will come slowly up, pale and spindling, and will be neglected, and the weeds will overrun them; and when the time for blossoming comes there will be found here and there a scrawny plant with one or two stingy blossoms, and men will say, "Now we see the outcome of this pretense. Look at the labels on the specimens. It is all humbug. The man says, 'Gorgeous purple.' Here is what he calls *gorgeous purple*! He says, 'Exceedingly beautiful.' That is his idea of *beauty*! He says, 'Remarkably fine.' That is *remarkably fine*, is it?" So they go through the whole catalogue, and say, "There was the promise, and here is the fulfillment!"

But do not you perceive that the way in which you use the seed, the manner in which you plant it, the skill that you exercise in preparing the soil to receive it, and the season that you have to plant it in, have much to do with its successful growth? There are a hundred circumstances which will have a great deal to do in determining what you will actually get. It is true that beautiful plants might have been produced from those seeds. They were deserving of all the praise that was bestowed upon them. There was no deception practiced concerning them. They might have been just what they were represented to be. But they were not what they might have been, for want of knowledge, for want of skill, and for want of the right adaptation of conditions to ends.

There be many persons who suppose, because Christianity is joy-producing, that when they become Christians they will necessarily be joyful. They suppose that they are to take it as they would nitrous oxide gas, and that when they have sucked it in awhile, they will begin to experience the inspiration of joy, that they will be lifted up, and that they will feel delightfully. There are those who suppose that there is a divine magnificent intoxication which God gives to the souls of his children; and that when the flash strikes them they will break forth into rejoicings, and say, "Joy!" "Glory!" "Hallelujah!" "How happy I am!" There are some who have such an experience; but how long does it last? How quick does the sudden blaze become sudden ashes!

If we are to see the ideal of the apostolic teaching on this point;

if we are to behold the results of a true Christian faith and hope fulfilled, it must be by taking as large a view as the apostle had, and looking at the conditions of joy, and the relations of it to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is said,

"Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice."

It is not simply a joy that comes from the buoyancy of your natural faculties. There is in that very phrase "Rejoice in the Lord," the opening up of a vast psychology. Let us look a little at it.

He that takes the Lord Jesus Christ as he is revealed in the Gospels, and in the teachings of his servants the apostles, will find that in him God is brought near, into personal relations with men, and into sympathy with them. That immense vagueness which some men call *God*; that terrible Power; that Fate; that unseen Being who looks down upon the world apparently with supreme indifference—for, though ten thousand groans go up toward God, no sigh comes back through the air to us to tell us that there is sympathy there; though sorrows sweep over the world as equinoctial storms by day and by night, for all that we can see by mere sense or natural reason God is as calm and cold as the upper ether)—is he a reality? Is there a God? If so, is he more than an engineer of this vast and complicated machine? What token have we? What can we gather from nature to teach us of God? I do not believe that nature, if you leave out the experience of the human family (and that part usually is left out when men study Divine nature to find Divinity) can teach you that God is good. I think that the argument stands fair hitherto, that either there is a divided empire, or there is a capricious Governor, sometimes good and sometimes bad. Outside of revelation, outside of the clear light which we derive from the Lord Jesus Christ, God is afar off. He is brought near in Christ Jesus. He came to teach us what God's dispositions are. He came to teach us that God is a Father, and that his purposes run through wide circles, and extend so far that we can no more judge of the limits of them than we could judge from the corn-kernel of what the whole harvest would be if we had never seen one. The beginnings are apparent, but the ultimate ends are obscure.

Jesus came into the range of human experience to bring down in himself, in his life and in his teachings, a notion of God that should bring him near to men, paternal, friendly, sympathetic. We did not need to be taught that he was powerful. That, material nature teaches us. We did not need to be taught that he was wise. The adjustment of affairs in the universe and in the world teaches us that. We did not need to be taught that God was vast. That is what we

mean by *infinity*. But that he has a heart of sympathy with men, and that he is in such a sense a Parent to men as we are to our children, and that he is friendly to us in such a sense as we are friendly one to another—this we did need to have taught to us. It was hinted at by other teachers, but it was never brought out in such a way by any other one as it has been by the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Christ there is developed a religion which arises from the intercourse between this divine Soul and our human souls. There is a religion which is not a mere routine of actions. There are myriads of people who think that religion consists in certain actions—so many prayers said ; so many postures taken ; so many symbols employed ; so many ceremonies kept ; so many duties performed. There are many who suppose that what are called “religious observances” are religion. That was very largely the state of the Jewish mind at the time when our Saviour came. Spirituality had well-nigh been lost out of sight, and men had pursued a round of observances which they thought satisfied the divine requirements ; but Jesus taught that God is a spirit, and that they who worship him must worship him by the spirit—by thought, by imagination, by emotion.

There is no purchase by our own merit—although there have been thousands who have supposed that God had rewards of virtue which were to be exchanged with men for certain services rendered. Jesus came to teach us that God does everything out of his own nature—that everything proceeds from divine grace. And what work men have made of the interpretation of this notion ! I think the sweetest thought, the very center idea, of the revelation of the character of God, to me, is this : that he does everything out of his own supreme will. There is no one thing that I can say with more heartiness, or that has in it more echoes of joy, than “Thy will be done.” If anything works righteousness in me or in you, it is God. If we are saved, it is by the forgiving and sparing mercy of God. What did Christ teach us to be the root and ground of hope for salvation, but God’s generosity ? The divine nature is so constructed that it loves to do good ; that it loves to recuperate men ; that it loves to restore that which sin has blurred or blasted. God loves to bless men out of the supremacy of a love which carries in it infinite benefaction wherever there is mental blight, throughout the heaven and the realms of the universe. The nature of God is fruitful in generosity. He is so good that he loves to do good, and loves to make men good, and loves to make them happy by making them good. He loves to be patient with them, and to wait for them, and to pour benevolence upon them, because that is his nature.

Why does a musician sing? To please himself. It is the very nature of his organization to sing. His mind loves music. Why does a painter love to paint? Because painting is congenial to his very organic nature. Why does the orator feel the joy of speech? Because his whole nature is attuned and attempered to that operation. Why is it, when you go into many and many a house, that you see all the children gathered in one room? Are they gathered around about the young? No. Are they gathered together with those that are full of frolic? No. They are gathered around the aged. It is the grandmother who sits in her chair, with her nice frilled cap, white as snow, on her head, and her spectacles lifted upon her brow. The little children play about her chair. They can hardly be coaxed away from her. Why are they all drawn to her? Because she makes them happy. Why does she make them happy? Because her thoughts are all serene. She does not do it on purpose. It is her pleasure to do it. She just pours out of herself the music of harmony, and it fills the child with joy. It is her nature to do it.

Why does Sir Curmudgeon, who lives in his castle, when his door has been opened by the hand of want coming in from the storm, say, "Get out—get out—you vagabond! I do not want to hear. Never come here again"? He does it because it is his nature to do it. He does it because he feels like it. When another man sees want, why do his eyes flow down with tears? Why does he instantly feel, "I adopt this want; I will bear this burden"? Why do men watch all day and all night at the door of want, and give, and give, and continue to give? Why are they happy in giving? Is it because of any agreement or bargain that they have entered into? No, they are acting out their nature. That is the way their soul runs.

Why does God love? Because it is his nature to love. Why is he patient? Because it is his nature. Why is he forgiving? Because that is his nature. Why does he promise everything to you without condition? Because he is just so generous. Why does he love you, though you are unworthy of love? Because that is just the way that the mind of God acts. And that this might be made manifest, he made the most magnificent display of it in this world in the Son of God, who came to live, to love, to suffer and to die for men. But that was only a faint representation. I do not hesitate to say of the royalty of that which is so vast and glorious in the spheres above, that it cannot be made known in time and in our horizon here. God is in himself so generous and good that all he does throughout the universe he does to please himself.

When I am happy, I smile; and I smile to please myself. When I feel impelled to sing, I sing; and I sing to please myself. I sing to satisfy a sense of song, and smile to satisfy a sense of pleasure. And God is loving and merciful and long-suffering to please a sense in him of love and mercy and long-suffering. He is generous toward men because he has a heart of generosity. His heart is filled full, from top to bottom, with this feeling. There is no computing the height or depth or length or breadth of the divine nature. Its amplitude is absolutely immeasurable and inconceivable, and out of that grand, glowing center of the divine nature it is that all goodness, all kindness, all beneficence, all faith, all hope, and all love are given forth.

God does these things to please himself. And, oh, what a shame it is that God has been so slandered by those who thought they loved him! Oh, what a perversion there has been of the nature of God! What clumsy machines have been invented with which to mar and blur the outline and ideal and interior of this glorious notion of an all-loving God, who brings out of himself, out of his nature, infinite atonement, infinite reconciliation, and infinite opportunities, and whose mercies are graces!

Consider, then, that in Jesus Christ we have brought near to us a God personal and sympathetic, in distinction from a God mechanical, afar off, cold, unsympathetic, and engineering. We have brought near to us in Jesus Christ a God whose nature it is to be bountiful, tender, sweet, beautiful, so that when we begin to see the traits that are in him, they draw out the same traits in us. We love because he has loved us.

If you go into Steinway's manufactory or ware-room, and strike certain chords of one of the powerful instruments, the chords of all the other instruments, though they are covered up, and apparently mute, will sound. Such are the correspondencies which exist between them, such is the sympathy which is communicated from one to another by the air, that when one vibrates they all vibrate. Though the sound be low and almost inaudible, it is there.

When the grandeur, the beauty and the love of the divine nature are presented to a man, they draw some response from every part of his nature which corresponds to that which is presented. So it is that there begins to be through this conception of God in Christ Jesus, a piety which is in the nature of a personal communion or affiliation. The hearts of men are thus drawn toward the heart of God, and there begins to be an interplay between them.

* This is the basis of reconciliation with God. Not that he is re-

conciled to us, but that we are reconciled to him. God's everlasting nature is that of forgiveness. As soon as the soul perceives such a God, and moves toward him in real moral consciousness, it begins to experience what is called *faith*—that faith which works by love. And just as soon as we accept this view of God in Christ Jesus, this centralization of the universe at the focal point of love, just so soon the universe begins to be filled with God. Wherever his power and government are, there is divinity; and wherever there is divinity, there is the nature of God. Christ has so built up the conception of God the Father that wherever anything makes suggestion to us, it is suggestion of infinite and inconceivable goodness, love and mercy.

I would not have you paint God as all light, without shadows; for I perceive that the infliction of pain is a part of the divine scheme, and is not inconsistent with God's character. I do not hate my child because I punish him. The schoolmaster does not hate the urchin because he whips him. Pain and penalty are remedial.

I expressed, last Sunday morning, my abhorrence of the idea that God should make pain for the sake of making pain. I do not take back a single word of it. I would rather convert every word into thunder to express my indignation against the teaching that there is a Being in heaven who ever gave one pang for the sake of giving that pang, or who continues pain for the sake of continuing pain. Such qualities as some attribute to God are our definition of a fiend. But to say that pain may be created in order that it may work out good, and that it may coöperate with love and patience, is in accordance with our experience. God is a God of goodness and gentleness and patience; but he is a God that will by no means clear the guilty. Glory be to his name for that. He will pierce men, he will give them pain, he will make them suffer, that through suffering they may come to that which they would not take through joy or love. These pain-bearing influences are a part of the evidence of the moral government of God. They are a part of that which is taught and that which is experienced in life.

I seem to you, probably, thus far, to have only been discoursing upon the relations of men to Christ. The bearing of this subject of joy-producing will appear when I say that there is no other power that has such a regulative influence as love; and that if we are brought by the disclosure which Christ makes of the Fatherhood of God into a personal relationship of love with him, then we are brought into that condition out of which will spring love by and by, spontaneously, fruitfully, abundantly.

Souls in this world are never made to act in solitude. We might

as well put a harp into a room and expect it to make music if there were no harper there as to expect that any individual soul will act itself out and manifest that which is good or bad if there is no other soul to act upon it, or to act in concert with it. We are awakened to ourselves, often, only by the action of those who are round about us. Under the general constitution of things men are aroused, developed, educated; but of all the influences which stimulate, arouse and ripen, none are as potential as love. And yet, though it be restraining, stimulating, constructive, it is so in spite of limitations, the very announcement of which would seem to make the thought of love almost impossible. For, in many men love is struggling for liberty to live. In many men love is as a fire when it is attempted to kindle grass and leaves with a shower in the heavens beating down upon the flame and threatening to extinguish it. Love is as a bird singing in the thicket, over which hovers a hawk, and behind which sits the owl, both waiting to end the song. Love, in this world, lives under conditions which every moment threaten its constitution, and its very life. Love in this world is as the orange-tree seeking to grow in Greenland. There is not summer enough, and there is a great deal too much winter. In its own land the orange is always in leaf, and always in blossom, and always with fruit growing and ripening on its boughs. But as an artificial and curious thing in far northern latitudes it is seldom that it shows any fruit that is ripe. It struggles to live, and cannot blossom forth into beauty, or develop into ample fruitfulness. The whole year attacks it, and is its enemy.

Love, as men are situated in this world, is weakened by our very ideality. It is with love as it with our thought of friends. When we first behold them we exaggerate our conception of what they are; but by and by life wears away our ideal of them to the bare reality; and then comes discontent. Love is chafed by conflict. It is marred by temper and passion. There are ten thousand influences which spring up to disfigure it. It is full of imperfections. It does not answer to our imagination of it. It does not answer to the ideal which we have formed of it. It does not answer to our intellectual conception of it. Selfishness creates warts on it. Avarice almost undermines it. The appetites stain it, and destroy its beauty. And yet, love struggles against all these things, and in spite of them all it was a truer center of self-government than any other that the world knows.

There are men who are so organized as to pride that they are discordant with themselves; but love can harmonize them. Love is the regnant harmonizing center. Reason cannot so bring into

harmony every part of a man's nature, and make him content, as love can. No man can be at peace with himself who has not love. Woe is he who is not conscious of one great faculty which expels all enemies; of one great experience that satisfies every part of his nature; of that love to which honor and conscience and pride and selfishness all bow down and do obeisance! There are hours when men feel it. Oh, that it could continue! Then the world would be no care or burden. Then storms would be as calms. There is an experience of men in regard to loving in some one or other direction that moves the center of the soul. That is the element which harmonizes. Thousands of thousands have had this harmonizing, reigning element of love.

Now, consider what love must be to Jesus, in whom everything is perfect, to our conception. Bring home to a man's consciousness the Lord Jesus Christ; let him have faith enough to limn the features and portray the divine beauty that is in him, and it will inspire in him a love which shall transcend all others. And it will have more ideality in it than any earthly love can have. The imagination will play more freely and more fruitfully every day, and every day it will be more admirable. Imagination is the root of faith. It is the foundation of the conception of the invisible. It makes it possible for a man to bring near to him the character of God in Christ Jesus. It gives endless variety to the thought of the divine nature. No man ever became tired of looking at the beauty and glory conceived of in the Lord Jesus Christ. The idea of him will grow stronger because he is invisible.

Many say, "You worship only your conception, your idea, of God." I say that ideas are more real than things are. Things appeal to the body: ideas to honor, manhood, the soul itself. And yet, I do not hesitate to say that there would be much in me which would be gratified if I could once see Christ. Sometimes, as I have lain in summer with the blinds closed to keep out the heat, and as through some little crevice in the window a ray of solar light has found its way into the room, I have thought, in my meditation, "If Christ would descend but as a beam of light that I might see him, it would be such a help to my senses! It would be a point for my memory to dart back to." I have sometimes felt, "Oh, that I could hear his voice!" And I have listened at night; I have listened in hours of sorrow; and I have heard nothing. I have called, and none has answered. I have reached out imploring hands, and nothing took them. I have said, "My Lord and my God, if thou art, speak to me!"—and there has been no response. And yet out of these hours I have come, feeling still that a silent and invisible

God can be more to me, taking life all through, than if he were actually present and visible in a bodily form. I take hold of the invisible by more sides than I do of the visible.

My father lived; my mother passed on before; but through all my life, though I lived with him, and loved him, and was instructed and guided by him, my father was not so much to me as my mother. Her I created; while he was created for me. Not able to conceive of an invisible friend! Oh, it is not when your children are with you, it is not when you see and hear them, that they are most to you; it is when the sad assembly is gone; it is when the daisies have resumed their growing again in the place where the little form was laid; it is when you have carried your children out, and said farewell, and come home again, and day and night are full of sweet memories; it is when summer and winter are full of touches and suggestions of them; it is when you cannot look up toward God without thinking of them, nor look down toward yourself and not think of them: it is when they have gone out of your arms, and are living to you only by the power of the imagination, that they are the most to you. The invisible children are the realest children, the sweetest children, the truest children, the children that touch our hearts as no hands of flesh ever could touch them. And do you tell me that we cannot conceive of the Lord Jesus Christ because he is invisible?

Here, then, are the stores of rejoicing,
 "Rejoice in the Lord."

You have such a sense of the divine governorship of the universe; you have such a sense of God brought near in the royalty of his generous nature; you have such a sense of the Lord Jesus Christ your Saviour; he is so near to you, and so present, that the power of love is excited in you; love so regulates your soul, so satisfies your reason, your imagination, and all the passions do so naturally bow down to the reign of love—especially love inspired toward the invisible, the spiritual and the perfect—that all the conditions are now present out of which come peace and joy—for peace is but the stem and the unfolding leaves of that plant whose blossom is joy.

Men ask me, "If this be the portion of Christian believers, why is there not more joy in the church?" Because you do not know how to plant seeds. You do not know how to cultivate these flowers. They are real seeds, and the flowers are beautiful, and the plant bears blessed fruit to those who know how to give it proper culture.

If you have the faith of Christ and heaven and God near to you; if you love so that all the parts of your being are pervaded with a

sense of these things; if the affluence of God reaches down to you, and you open your soul and let in the consciousness of Christ present with you, then you will have joy, and you will have that peace which passeth all understanding,

"Oh" says one, "I am so harassed with cares! I might be joyful if I had not so much care."

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

There is provision made in Christ for care.

"But I have such grief! God has dealt with me severely; and a wounded heart cannot rejoice."

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness."

If the earth had sense and sensibility, when the spade opened it it would cry, "Oh! why art thou wounding me?" But in that open earth I drop handfuls of seed, and I cover them up; and by and by I go to that place again, and it is all grown over with sightly, beautiful stalks, which are covered with blossoms. Does the earth mourn now?

God is opening the furrow in you and putting in seeds. It is application to you now; at present it does not seem to you joyous; but afterward it will produce in you the peaceable fruit of righteousness, when it has grown and blossomed, and is covered with fruit.

"Is it possible for a man who is in poverty and sickness to be joyful?" The apostle says,

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." "I know how both to abound and to suffer need."

There is a grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ that can sustain you in all the inequalities of life; that can make solitude tolerable; that can turn back all the sharp points of temptation. There is a grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that can make disappointment itself contented; that can so cover the soul with the atmosphere of peace that it shall pass all understanding. No man shall be able to tell his neighbor what is the meaning of that strange peace. There is a grace of God which shall enable you to live with joy, and which shall enable you to triumph in that hour when you are brought face to face with your best friend, Death, that shall take you where you shall hear the thunder of that choral song which, though not far from us, is yet inaudible—which, though we cannot hear it, like the ocean itself murmurs and rolls upon our shores.

Then, *Rejoice in the Lord*; and again I say, *Rejoice*.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We draw near to thee, thou that art unknown, whom the heavens do hide, whom we cannot see in the flesh and live. We draw near to thee by that new and living way—by Jesus. We draw near to thee, because he hath taught us of thee, and because we behold in his life and disposition those very elements of thy nature which it was hard for us to discern—which were gathered but imperfectly from anything in nature. Now, since thou hast been pleased to present thyself to us incarnate—a manifestation of God to help our understanding, and to give us the seed of better thought—we are touched by thy loving Spirit, and are able to kindle in our souls a higher and brighter view of thy nature. And we rejoice that it is such a one as fills us with confidence, and that we long to trust such a God as thou art made known to be. Now, thou hast by love taught us how to translate even things seemingly terrible. Now, thou hast by the power of example in Jesus robbed us of all thoughts of evil and of fear. Though thou art a consuming fire, as thou didst appear to thy servant Moses of old in the burning bush; though thou art a God of truth and of justice, that will by no means clear the guilty, we believe that the mighty enginery of time and of the eternal world are for the development of goodness in men, and that thou art the Father, bringing up thy children into the image and likeness of thyself, and that thou wilt not suffer sin in them, but wilt cleanse them from it, and wilt redeem them from its power, and make them kings and priests unto God.

Grant, we pray thee, that we may not be of that number who believe not; who turn away toward darkness; who seek but to bide themselves; who do not feel the need of light, nor love it, nor desire it; who herd with swine, and eat the husks that they devour. May we be of those who repentantly turn back to thee for the salvation of their souls. We pray that we may behold thee in such light and glory that all things to us shall acclaim thee God.

We beseech of thee, O God, that we may not go heedless into the great and unknown world, when thy providence is full of warnings, and when thy love stands pleading that we will accept thee and thy mercy, and that we will not venture our souls upon all the risks and perils of the future.

O Lord Jesus, we pray that thou wilt lift thyself up to us as the Chief among ten thousand, and the One altogether lovely, that we may be won to thy service, and to thy disposition, that we may become the children of God, and that we may live in this life in the midst of its cares, and under its burdens, and in its sorrows, and still be strong by the inspiration of thy Spirit.

We pray that thou wilt forgive us whatever has been offensive to thee. Every day we know that we sully the purity of our hearts. Every day we fall short of known duties. Every day we have to depend upon that same patience which thus far hath borne us, and upon that forgiveness which hath been our salvation.

Cleanse us, we pray thee, not only from the commission of sin, but from the love of sin. May we learn so to carry ourselves that with all our heart and mind and soul and strength we may serve thee, and serve thee in the spirit of true loving.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt comfort any who are in circumstances of trial. Lift the light of thy countenance upon any who are sitting in darkness. Open the way, if there be any who are perplexed and know not what to do. If there be mourners in thy presence, who mourn over their

transgressions, be thou found of them a pardoning God. If there be those who are burdened with cares, may they be sustained by thy providence. By thy Spirit may they be able to lift themselves above the horizon where care doth live. May they look to those other lands, far above, and see what eternal joys await them.

We pray that thou wilt make us strong in the day of adversity, and able to bear. May we be clad in all the armor of God, both offensive and defensive, and be prepared to meet every exigency, and yet not be overthrown—to be found still standing when the battle is over, and able to stand.

We pray, O Lord our God, that thou wilt grant more and more unity of the heart and fellowship of the Spirit through Jesus Christ. May the hope of salvation be more fruitful in us in godliness and truth and charity.

We pray that thou wilt grant that thy blessing may rest, this day, upon all who preach thy truth, of whatever name they may be. May thy Spirit be with them to help their infirmity; to cleanse their eyes, that they may see more clearly; to strengthen their hearts, and fill them with divine power, that they may, out of their own living consciousness, preach a living Christ. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt unite thy people more and more. May they be united around about thy love, by its attractive power and sympathy.

We pray that thou wilt spread the light of truth throughout all our land. Bless schools, and academies, and colleges, and all seminaries of learning. We pray that this great people may have knowledge spread among them; and may knowledge carry virtue; and may virtue draw its supply from piety; and may all this people be cleansed from filth, and from immorality, and from ignorance, and from superstition, and from avarice, and from hardness of heart, and from corruption; and may they be a people redeemed of God unto good works.

We pray for the nations of the earth. May violence no longer rule. Speedily bring in that day of peace when war shall have no echo. Bring in that day when superstition shall no longer torment with fear, nor ignorance bring weakness, and so oppression. Oh, may the people be educated, and brought into a practical and saving knowledge of God, and be lifted up into the privileges that are their own. May all thy promises which respect this world at last begin to march; and may we behold that God is coming forth for the salvation of the whole earth. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

And to thy name shall be the praise, forever and ever. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, wilt thou bless the word which we have spoken, and grant that it may do us good in our innermost souls. Dear Lord, we are poor, and we need thy riches. If thou lovest us, Jesus, why are we so far from thy bosom? Why dost thou suffer us to stumble? We are parents, and we watch our children so that they do not go out of our sight: dost thou so watch us? We watch them that we may save them from danger, or cure their harms: dost thou so watch us? Thou who art the Lover of the sparrow, and art grieved to see it fall, are we not better than many sparrows? Fold us to thy heart, and grant that we may have communicated to us the consciousness of it. Oh, how poor we are in ourselves! Oh, how rich we might be in thee! Rain down upon us the light of God. Pour from thyself streams of light and life and joy in the Holy Ghost. And bring us, at last, amid tears, beyond sighing and sorrow, beyond sinning, into the land of rest. And to thy name shall be the glory, forever. *Amen.*

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